

KESTREL

falco tinnunculus

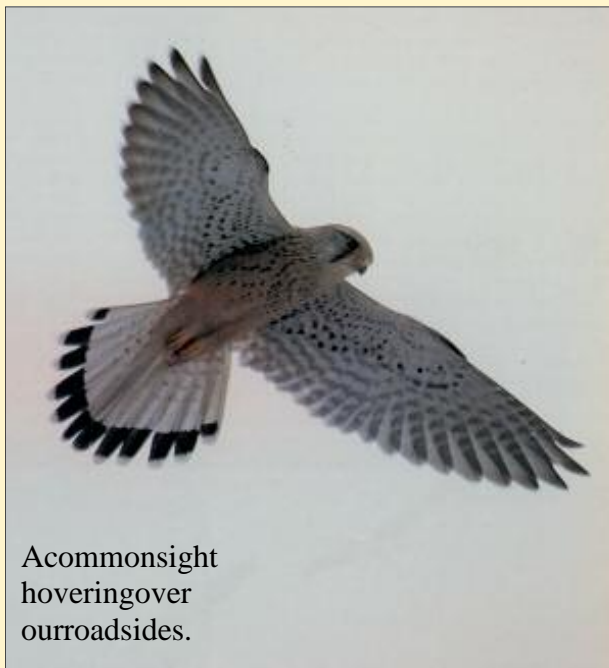
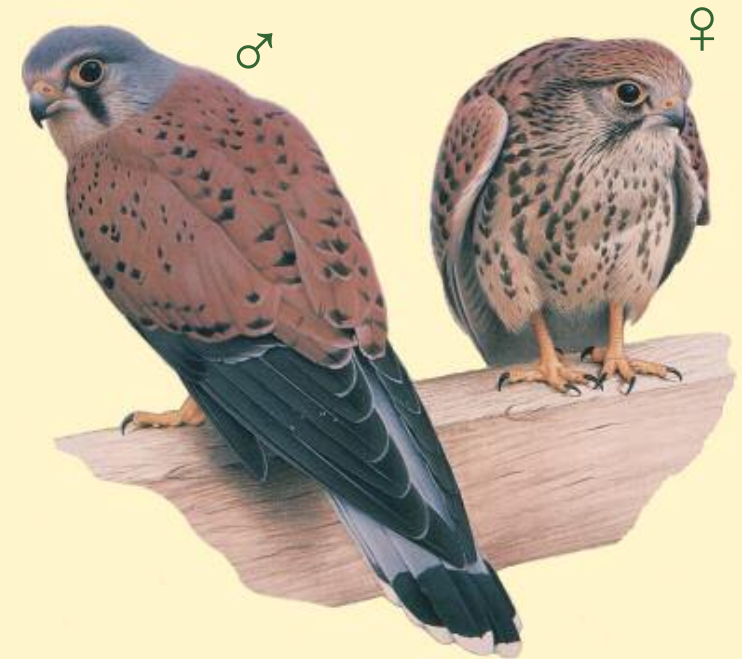
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Length: 32cm –35cm

Wingspan: 71cm –80cm

Weight: 0.14kg –0.31kg

Habitat: Kestrels do not build nests but make a scrape on ledges or in holes or forks in trees. Courtship begins in early spring with spectacular mock fights and display flights. A clutch of 4 to 6 eggs takes about a month to hatch with fledging about a month later. During the incubation and early brooding period, all food is provided by the male, requiring him to hunt many times each day.



A common sight hovering over our roadsides.

Despite being persecuted during the 19th Century when gamekeepers virtually eliminated it from some parts of the British Isles, the Kestrel made a successful comeback thanks to its remarkable adaptability. It has learned to take advantage of new hunting areas such as roadsides and even town centres. It is also able to switch to different prey whenever occasional slumps in the vole population occur.

Although the Kestrel is a true falcon, its flight style, prey and method of hunting are far from typical. The Kestrel feeds mainly on small mammals - principally the short tailed vole - which it hunts by hovering, head into wind, or which it spots from a perch.

In adults, the sexes are easily identified. The male has a brick-red back, grey head and a grey tail with a sub-terminal black band. Females and immature birds are mainly brown with darker speckles and bars.